



GMA & Capital Facilities

Growth Management Services

Capital facilities planning is essential for economic vitality and quality of life

Description

Communities throughout the state are facing huge infrastructure needs, estimated to be billions of dollars statewide. The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires communities to plan for infrastructure and offers new revenue sources local governments can use for capital facilities.



Cities and counties will be able to grow successfully, if they can provide adequate services to their citizens. This includes taking care of deficiencies and providing facilities to keep pace with growth.

Viable, vibrant communities depend on good infrastructure planning and financing. Only with well-thought-out capital facilities plans that include adequate financing methods will local governments and Washington be able to effectively and realistically provide for growth.

Background

Under the GMA, local elected officials gather facts about their communities' capital needs to support the land use choices set out in their 20-year comprehensive plan. Then they make tough choices about how they will provide revenues for these needs.

The GMA authorizes two new revenue sources and encourages local governments to develop a balanced and fair mix of these and other sources. Some options include using sales and real estate taxes, utility taxes, rates charged for services, and impact fees.



If communities are not willing or able to pay for facilities and services, they can adjust the quality and quantity of services they deliver. Communities can decide if they want to arrange growth patterns in a different way so services can be delivered more efficiently. They also can plan to serve a smaller area.

Some services – such as natural gas, electricity, water, and sewer – may not be provided by cities or counties, but by private or public utilities or special districts. In these cases, cities and counties work closely with these entities to ensure that their plans are consistent with city and county comprehensive plans.

What's Being Done

Capital facilities program planning under the GMA is a challenging task for many local governments. Some communities have been able to prepare detailed, effective plans. For others, their capital facility plans are more of a first step in getting the information they need to make tough choices on the quality and quantity of services they can afford to deliver.



Capital facilities plans (CFPs) are essential to local and statewide efforts to maintain economic vitality and high quality of life. Adequate water, wastewater treatment, and road capacity are important to many local efforts to attract new industry. Maintaining and expanding local stormwater management programs and upgrading or adding wastewater treatment in many localities will be important to restoring wild salmon.

CFPs should be updated periodically. Local government spending needs to be consistent with the plans.

What's Next

Capital facilities planning is an ongoing process. Many cities and counties review their CFP during their annual comprehensive plan amendment process and/or annual budget process. They do this to make sure facilities are keeping pace with growth, to determine if their growth projections are on target, to adjust rates and fees, or to address new situations that have arisen.

In 1998 the state Legislature provided funds for an infrastructure study to identify local needs. A final report was compiled in June 1999. It showed billions of dollars of unmet local needs for roadways, bridges, water, sewer, and stormwater facilities. That means that the quality and quantity of services in some communities will decline, or communities will not be able to accommodate their projected growth if new sources of revenue cannot be found. A good CFP process is even more essential for communities if they want to manage future funding shortfalls and maintain their economic vitality and levels of service standards.

Growth Management Services of the Washington Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) has been working with cities and counties for the last ten years to help them improve their CFPs. To further assist local jurisdictions, CTED is currently testing a new CFP software tool that should make the CFP process more comprehensive, user friendly, and cost effective. The CFP tool was developed as a series of computer macros and templates on Excel software. CTED is currently testing the CFP software in four jurisdictions and may add others. The test run will be completed in 2003. Modifications to the software may be made after the testing is complete. On successful completion of the CFP test run, CTED plans to make the CFP tool available to all Washington jurisdictions. More information on the CFP software tool is available on a separate CTED fact sheet.

For More Information

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